

Other Submissions

In order to process your filing, please fill out the following information. If you do not know the docket number, please leave it blank and we will fill it out for you.

Please fill out the following information to help us complete your filing:

Docket #: FD -30186 -Sub-No 3 -

Subject: * TRRC Draft EIS-Western Alignment
 First Name: * Deborah
 Middle Name: * L
 Last Name: * Hanson
 Address: * 1002 Pleasant

City: * Miles City
 State: * MT
 Zip Code: * 59301-
 Email Address: * hans_deb@hotmail.com
 Group/Affiliation: * Northern Plains Resource Council
 Message: * Attention Victoria Rutson, Chief
 Kenneth Blodgett, EPS Project Manager

Re: Comments on the Draft Supplemental Impact Statement for the Tongue River Railroad Co. - Western Alignment

I am a resident of Miles City, MT and the mouth of the Tongue River. I am also a member of the Northern Plains Resource Council and with other members have been involved in the Tongue River Railroad application since the early 1980s.

In general, I still oppose the TRRC (Tongue River Railroad Co.) in their application of the railroad because I see no Public Need. This railroad has been permitted for over 5 years and still has not pursued rights of way!

This railroad is speculation and a get rich scheme for a few and not a mode of transportation devised out of a crying need.

Now, I will comment specifically to the document.

I. Miles City is cut by the railroad and only has one overpass. By increasing the number of trains passing through, what mitigation has been considered for emergency services--fire, ambulance, hazardous waste accidents, etc.?

II. Additional analysis must be required on what is needed to be done if there are more tracks and terminals on Fort Keogh if TRRC runs the show. Will there also be a need to put in an additional interstate exit to access the new terminal so that traffic does not have to go past the fish hatchery?

III. The Miles City Fish Hatchery will be affected by the realignment. Easements will be needed from the State of Montana. If mediation does not succeed, it looks to me like

STB would supercede Montana control and, in fact, grant SEA a type of eminent domain. This is a huge factor--to allow a private rail line to condemn State property that supports a real project of public need and necessity.

IV. Threatened and Endangered Species--Sage Grouse are definitely a threatened species--even moreso since your study was completed. There are 4 sage grouse leks within 1 mile of ROW (right of way) of high populations counts in the Tongue River project area near Otter Creek, Ashland and south to Birney. This document did not address this problem in detail and under mitigation brushed off this problem by stating the TRR could offer "appropriate compensation" for potential loss of grouse habitat of avoid the lek just during mating season. This is totally unacceptable. Once this prime habitat is destroyed we will have disturbed the sage grouse population which is declining rapidly in the country and Montana is one of the last few places where the sage grouse are holding their own. Their leks must be avoided period! This subject need to be revisited in detail. (I have been involved in the Montana Sage Grouse Study group.) Also, combined with potential mining and coal bed methane development, the cumulative effect could be disastrous to the sage grouse populationl.

V. Cumulative developments of the TRR, coal mining and coal bed methane development are huge and have been brushed off in this EIS. The roads, the noise, the air pollution, the water degradation and depletion in the Powder River Basin, the influx of people, the noxious weed problem, the affect on wildlife are all huge if combined with the three developments.

The pressure on social services in our small towns that are strapped financially right now was not even addressed. Drug problems, law enforcement, traffic, road maintenance, fire crews all cost money up front that is not addressed in the "trade-off". Only a few sentences and charts that support the benefits and no attempt to develop a scenario of up-front development costs to the communities. A suggestion to the TRRC that they should consult for purposes of addressing potential social and economic problems and that they shall provide practical assistance is "lip service" to the reality our community will face.

We will most likely lose railroad jobs rather than gain them and the state will most likely lose mining jobs to Wyoming as this line opens up Gillette, WY coal to our markets.

There are so many other comments to make, but I will end here.

This Tongue River Railroad was a bad idea in the early 1900's and still is in the early 2000's.

Sincerely,

Deborah Hanson